

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Today, U.S. Rep. Michael Honda (CA-15), chair emeritus of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, joined Judy Chu (CA-32), chairwoman of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC), and Rep. Barbara Lee (CA-9) spoke at a White House event in honor of the first official World Health Organization (WHO)-sponsored "World Hepatitis Day."

**Congressman Mike Honda, CAPAC Chair Emeritus, commended the Obama Administration for their efforts to combat the spread of viral hepatitis. "With the recent introduction of the Viral Hepatitis Action Plan from the Department of Health and Human Services, our government made an unprecedented commitment to advance and integrate national efforts on hepatitis," said Honda. "This action plan, along with today's Presidential proclamation, is a clear signal that this Administration is serious about the threat posed by viral hepatitis. I have worked for many years to bring the issue of viral hepatitis to the forefront. As the lead sponsor of several pieces of hepatitis legislation in current and recent Congresses, today holds special significance in light of the Administration's recent efforts."**

**He closed by saying, "Today, we sound the alarm – louder than ever before – on this silent killer. Today, we recognize the over five million Americans who suffer from viral hepatitis and give them hope. Today, we take another concrete step to break the silence and begin to fight back. Today, we celebrate World Hepatitis Day."**

"Preventing the spread of viral hepatitis is one of our top priorities," said Chairwoman Chu. "Hepatitis B has for far too long been a silent killer of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. While we make up 6 percent of the total U.S. population, we account for more than 50 percent of hepatitis B cases in this country."

Congresswoman Chu then spoke about her personal connections to those who had suffered and died from chronic Hepatitis infections. The first was Chi Mui, a community activist from her district who died of Hepatitis B induced liver cancer a month after being elected the first Asian American Mayor of the City of San Gabriel. The second was her own sister-in-law, who passed away last week from liver cancer after battling Hepatitis C for over twenty years.

"The greatest tragedy was that their deaths were entirely preventable," said Chu. "I want you to know you have allies in Congress. We will not give up until we eradicate this disease. It is time to put these silent killers to rest."

"It is estimated that up to 5.3 million persons living in the U.S. might be living with hepatitis—and the vast majority of those who are infected are not even aware," said Congresswoman Barbara Lee, Chair of CAPAC's Healthcare Taskforce. "Hepatitis, like many other health conditions,

disproportionately impacts racial and ethnic minorities in the U.S. and vulnerable communities around the world. Although there been many challenges in the fight against Hepatitis, I am confident that we can and will win this fight. We have the tools to effectively prevent and control the spread of hepatitis, and we have new treatments that are improving survival rates.”

### Background

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), viral hepatitis is a top 10 infectious disease killers and the leading cause of liver cancer and cirrhosis worldwide. Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C alone cause approximately 80% of the world's liver cancer. Approximately 500 million people, or 1 in 12 persons worldwide, suffer from chronic viral hepatitis infections. A million of those who are infected die each year from liver issues caused by the disease. Many of those who are chronically infected with viral hepatitis are unaware of their infection, which is why it is often referred to as a “silent killer.”

Over half of all Americans who suffer from chronic hepatitis B infection are of Asian or Pacific Islander descent. Approximately 1 in 10 Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are chronically infected with Hepatitis B, compared to 1 in 1000 Caucasian Americans.

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The Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC) is comprised of Members of Congress of Asian and Pacific Islander descent and members who have a strong dedication to promoting the well-being of the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community. Currently Chaired by Congresswoman Judy Chu, CAPAC has been addressing the needs of the AAPI community in all areas of American life since it was founded in 1994.